



Paula Dearing's son, Bill, joined The Priory School in January 2016

"Bill just needed to be accepted for who he is and that's exactly what The Priory have done."

A difficult beginning

Bill has struggled to fit in most of his life. "He has always been picked on because I feel he was always in the wrong place", says mum Paula, "I have fought against Doctors and Head Teachers all of Bill's life, asking for help because I knew something wasn't right but I just kept being fobbed off".

Bill attended a mainstream secondary school but was bullied (both mentally and physically) which caused his behaviour at home to change. Bill has two older siblings, "I watched as the bullied became the bullier".

"Home life was so strained during that time, he would take all his frustrations out on his family. I used to tell my daughter to not have eye contact with Bill and to go straight to her room to avoid him, it was awful. A dark cloud hung over our family." The secondary school eventually admitted that they couldn't keep Bill safe and he walked away from regular school life in June 2014.

With the support of The Pilgrim Hospital School Programme, where Bill attended part time, Paula home schooled him over the following 15 months. Because of these extreme circumstances, officials then began to take Paula seriously and eventually CAMHS became involved and an assessment of Bill's health took place. What followed was a diagnosis in September 2015 of Autism, Dyspraxia and Dyslexia.



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A fresh start

With an Educational Health Care Plan now in place for Bill, he was able to join The Priory School in January 2016.

Bill had by now, missed most of Year 7 and all of Year 8, so things began slowly. Bill found the transition from home back in to school life very difficult, worried that he would be singled out for being different again, Bill was hesitant. But after just 3 weeks, he began to settle. Paula, "One morning there were just no tears anymore, he was keen to get into school, I was ecstatic!"

Wind the clock on 11 months and Bill has gone from strength to strength.

Bill says, "School was always a bad place for me. If I thought of school I would just think of being treated badly and crying a lot. The Priory is so different to anything like that, the teachers actually understand me and listen to my point of view about things. And it's not embarrassing here if you don't quite get something and you need extra help, the teachers just help you."



Achievements

"I used to hate Science! It was my worst subject, I just didn't understand any of it and my grades were bad. But then I met Miss Hebblewhite and everything changed. I can't believe I'm saying this but I love Science! I won an award this year too, out of the whole school, for putting the most effort into Science as a subject. And Miss says I've got an exam coming up that she thinks I'll pass. I might even be able to go for a Science GCSE eventually!"

Another major turn in events is Bill's enthusiasm for his attendance. From being a non-attender to now having 100% attendance, "I'm determined to keep my 100% attendance for the whole year, I'm going to see if I can do it!"

Paula, "The difference in my son is quite incredible. I cannot thank The Priory School enough. The teachers are wonderful with him and this has changed his behaviour beyond recognition. We no longer have the dark cloud, family life is fun and we all laugh together again. Bill just needed to be accepted for who he is and that's exactly what the Priory have done. And the added bonus is him really enjoying not just science, but also Maths and IT. It turns out he's really good at that subject too!"

"I was never concerned or even thought about GCSEs for Bill - I just wanted him to be happy, but to see him so settled and doing so well in lessons too, it's quite overwhelming."

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